



Henry Leman in later life. *History of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, 1883.

Henry E. Leman, Riflemaker

Charles E. Hanson, Jr.

Henry Eichholz Leman was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, March 8, 1812, and died there March 12, 1887. His ancestors had lived in Lancaster County for generations but there is no evidence that any of them were gunmakers.

The name was and still is pronounced in three different ways: Lehman, Leamon and Lemon. The gunmaker's local friends and many of his descendants said "Lemon." However, some of Henry's cousins spelled their name Leamon and he himself said that was the correct pronunciation. I'll do the same: if it was good enough for Henry it's good enough for me.

Captain Dillin was correct in identifying the Lemans as French Huguenots. They came to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with the Ferree and Lefevre families.

Daniel Leman, grandfather of our subject, married a Miss Ferree and settled in Paradise Township in Lancaster County. His tombstone marked "D.L." was still visible a hundred years ago in East Lampeter Township near Soudersport, Pennsylvania. His son Jacob, 1756-1835, served in a company of Pequa Rangers during the Revolution and later became a farmer and brewer. In 1792 he married Catherine Eichholz (1773-1856).

The couple raised a large and interesting family. Their children were:

Catherine, 1796-1857.

Maria, 1798-1872, the wife of Thomas Barry of Baltimore, who died in Mexico during the Mexican War.

George, 1800-1830.

Rebecca, born in 1802, widow first of Dr. Galbraith and then of Col. James Cameron, killed at the first Battle of Bull Run.

Joseph, 1805-1832.

Susan, 1807-1836.

Ana Caroline, 1809-1851.

Henry E., 1812-1887.

Elizabeth Cecilia, 1814-1834.

Margaret Adelia, 1817-1842.

Henry Leman was apprenticed at age 16 to Melchior Fordney for three years. He then went to work for George W. Tryon as a journeyman gunsmith in 1831 and stayed there until he opened his own shop in part of his father's brewery in 1834.

This combination of training in his youth, three years of apprenticeship to a master workman in the Lancaster style and three years working experience in a busy production shop, probably influenced his development of

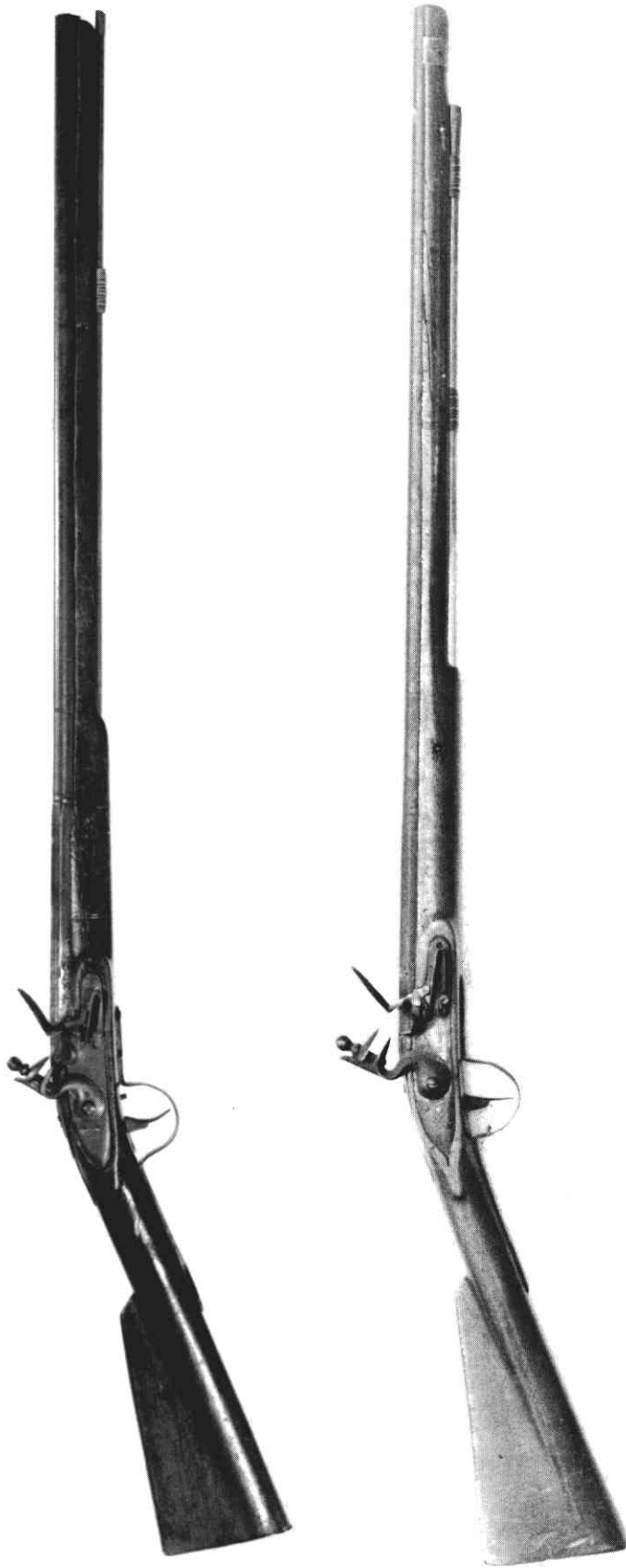


a cheap production rifle of good quality in a consistently Lancaster style but adapted to the new economic considerations of the developing markets in the South and the West.

During his first year's operations Leman made 250 rifles. One of his earliest orders was from John N. Lane in St. Louis for 50 rifles to be used in the Indian trade. The forge and rifle mill for his business were on the east bank of the Conestoga River about a hundred yards above the confluence with Lititz Creek near the village of Catfish, now called Oregon. The machinery, of course, was operated by water power. Stocking, lockwork, etc., were all done in Lancaster. Leman lived in a county seat called "Cedar Hill" near his mill at Catfish.

His rifle business grew steadily and on November 7, 1837, he received his first government contract for 500 flintlock rifles, triumphing, along with Deringer, Tryon and J. Fordney, over a field of a dozen other makers who submitted rifles for examination and trial. Price of the rifles was \$14.00 each and in general they were flintlocks with long patch boxes and barrels about 42 inches long. Each rifle had a woolen cover and was accompanied by a mold, wiper and charger. They were to be packed in boxes of not more than 25 rifles each. First proof was one-half ounce of powder and two patched balls. Second proof was one-half ounce of powder and one patched ball. Finished rifles were inspected. Apparently the contract was completed satisfactorily: he had finished 310 rifles by July 14, 1838.

For some years Deringer and Tryon edged him out on government rifle contracts and James Henry did the same for rifle sales to the American Fur Company. However,



Left, an early Leman flintlock Northwest gun, barrel cut to 32 inches, period 1845, and a Leman Northwest gun of the 1850's, 0.60 caliber, 30-inch barrel. Both from Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.

Leman boldly entered the manufacture of Northwest Indian trade guns and received a government contract to make 500 of them, together with 250 plain powder horns and pouches, on February 8, 1842. In August of the same year he was awarded another contract for 600 Northwest guns of two barrel lengths and 300 each of powder horns and shot pouches. He was now in direct competition with the Tryon Company and by 1855 he had eliminated it as a competitor for government Northwest gun contracts.

During these years Leman made a wide variety of rifles for the regular civilian market. Many of the surviving specimens are long Lancaster rifles, often stocked in plain maple artificially striped. As early as 1840 he also repaired muskets and other arms for the state at Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Meadville Arsenals.

Leman was an energetic businessman. An 1839 advertisement in the Lancaster *Intelligencer* advised the readers that "The subscriber has constantly on hand several hundred Rifles, of every description, and particularly calls the attention of persons removing to the west. Also double and single barrel shot guns, Armstrong dueling pistols, Rifle barrels, etc., all of which are warranted. Henry E. Leman."

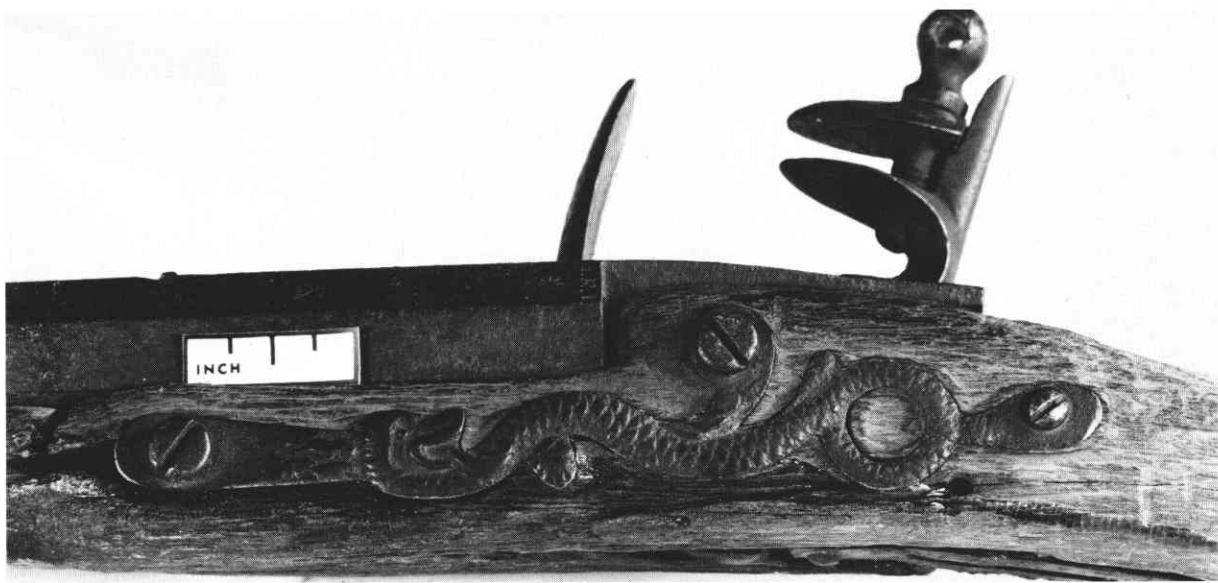
Contracts with fur trading companies were vigorously pushed. The Ewing Brothers of Fort Wayne, Indiana and points west, were good customers. One of their orders in 1849 included 100 rifles, bores 30 to 35 to the pound, two thirds with bright barrels at \$7.45 each, one-third browned barrels at \$7.60. Rifles were one-half flint and one-half percussion. In 1850 they bought 34 flint "Indian rifles" at \$7.45, thirteen ditto with browned barrels at \$7.60, 31 percussion Indian rifles with bright barrels at \$7.20 and 19 ditto with browned barrels at \$7.85.

About 1850 the country mill near Catfish was abandoned and Leman built a new factory in Lancaster, at the corner of Walnut Street and Cherry Alley, which utilized steam power. The building was still standing a few years ago, divided into row houses.

The new factory consolidated his operations and speeded up production. On January 17, 1852, he wrote one of the western fur trading companies, "The style and finish of the Rifles have improved since we are now in the new factory."

According to the 1850 census Leman had 34 employees. During the year ending June 1, 1850, he bought 50 tons of bar iron, 2,500 gun barrels and 2,500 pounds of brass. Production for that year was 5,000 gun barrels and 2,500 complete guns.

In 1851, Henry married Anna Dubois (1828-1873) daughter of Louis Dubois and Anna Hull of Newburgh, New York. She was a descendant of Louis Dubois, a French Huguenot who came to America on the same ship as the first Leman. The couple's children were: Henry E.



Brass serpent side-plate from Lemman Northwest gun ca. 1850.

Jr., Samuel W., Adelia and James Cameron. Both Henry Jr. and James eventually worked with their father.

Leman purchased a long brick building on Duke Street and moved into number 305 at the south end of the row. There all of his children were born. Eight houses on Cherry Street were occupied by workmen in the factory and they were known as "gunmaker's row." Most of the workers were of German descent and worked by the piece.

By this time there had been significant changes in Lemman rifles. The old long patchboxes had given way to cap boxes and finally most of those cap boxes were of a distinctive design with a round lid and a kind of fleur-de-lis finial. In the late 1850s the barrels of rifles for Indians and western hunters became shorter and of larger caliber. Guards, butt plates, rod pipes and stock tips were extremely plain and made of brass. Some of the later butt plates on Indian rifles were made of cast malleable iron and a few deluxe short rifles were mounted in German silver. Some half-stocks were made for the sporting trade. If the customer so ordered, engraving and inlays were available.

The Northwest guns also experienced some evolution in design through the years. Lemman's earliest guns were rather heavy and clumsy. The locks used slender and deeply rounded gooseneck hammers and the frizzens were tall and thin with slight curves in the tail. In the 1850s the gooseneck hammers were more substantially made and frizzens had a nearly right angle with straight tails like U.S. muskets. The stocks became more graceful with slender wrists and thinner forestocks. In its final development the Lemman flint Northwest gun of 1860 copied details of contemporary Hudson's Bay guns: lock with rounded tail and heavy double-throat hammer, and buttplate of flat brass held on with five screws. The only dated Lemman trade guns that I've seen were government

contract specimens dated 1842 and 1843 on the lock plate. This may have been a government regulation at one time, for Deringers are known dated 1843 and the Museum of the Fur trade has Tryon trade guns dated 1843 and 1846.

The 1850s brought increasing business with the Gold Rushes in 1849 to California and 1859 to Colorado, the increased issues of rifles to Indians by the government and the withdrawal of both Deringer and Tryon from the government Northwest gun business (Deringer had his last contract in 1843 and Tryon in 1855).

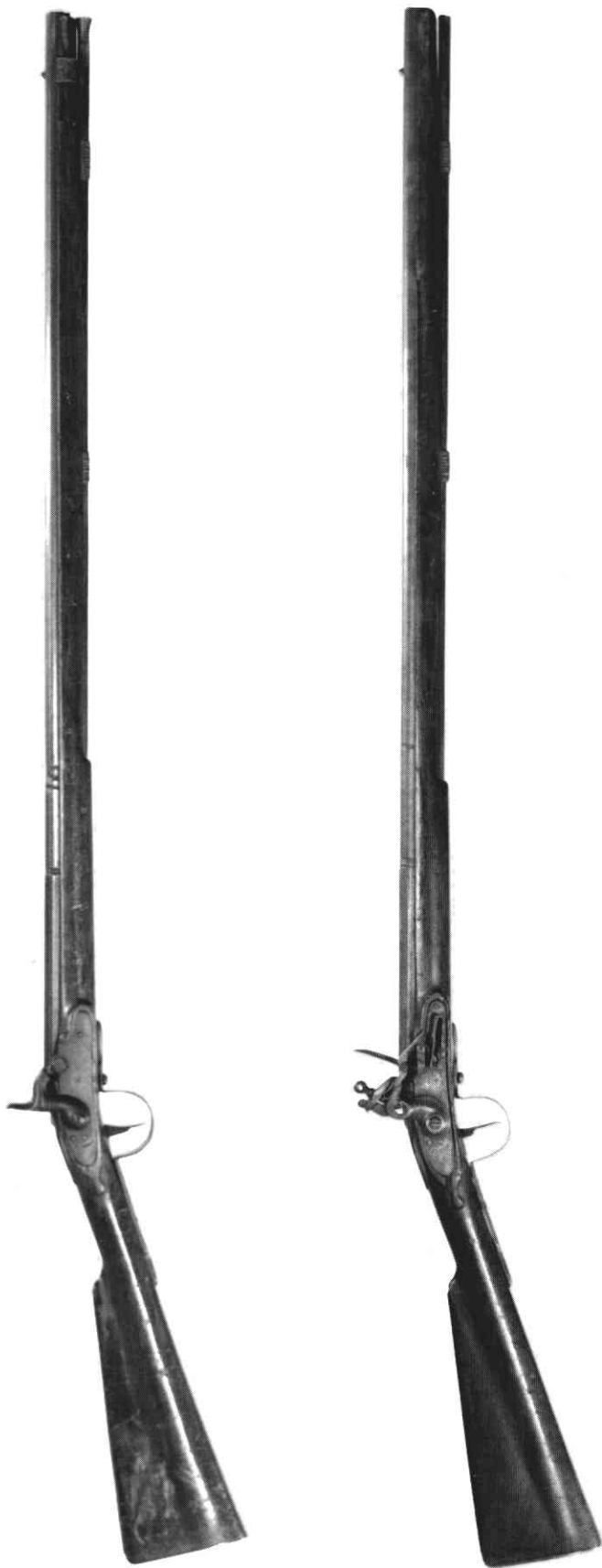
Fragmentary accounts of Pierre Chouteau Jr. & Co. of St. Louis include:

- 1850 – 10 flint Lemman Indian rifles.
- 1851 – 60 flint Lemman Indian rifles
 - 20 Lemman Indian rifles at \$7.00
 - 30 Lemman Indian rifles at \$6.89
- 1852 – 100 flint Lemman Indian rifles.
- 1853 – 110 flint Lemman Indian rifles.
 - 20 Lemman percussion rifles.
- 1854 – 40 Lemman percussion rifles,
 - Double Set Triggers,
 - Browned barrels at \$8.00.

On December 28, 1855, the Chouteau Company wrote this testimonial to Lemman:

We are in receipt of yours of 26th December and most willingly and cheerfully state that the Rifles manufactured by you for our Indian trade have always given entire satisfaction to our traders & the Indians, and we have no recollection of a complaint having been made in relation to your Rifles or Guns during the long period in which you manufactured for us.

Robert Campbell, one-time fur trader and long-time St. Louis dealer in trade goods, also gave Lemman a testimonial in 1855 saying that he had "found no rifles for the Indian trade that gave more general satisfaction than yours have done." Robert Hyslop, prominent New York



Leman percussion Northwest gun, caliber 0.70, 36-inch barrel, ca. 1857-8, and a late Lemman flintlock Northwest gun, caliber 0.70, 36½-inch barrel, period 1860. Both from the Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.

merchant, retired January 1, 1856, and his letter to Lemman was no less complimentary than the others.

I take pleasure in saying that during my intercourse with you for these last twenty years, none other than the best feelings have existed between us, and having as you know been extensively engaged in the Indian trade in all its branches among the prominent items are the articles of Rifles which you have supplied me with and am happy to add that the largest portion of my purchases have been of your manufacture and in every case they have given entire satisfaction and in no instance within my recollection have one of your rifles proved imperfect in any one of its parts.

The Ewing Brothers, still trading with Indians in Indiana, Missouri, Iowa and Kansas, made these purchases:

July 2, 1852

- 16 Indian flint rifles at \$7.00.
- 8 Indian percussion rifles at \$7.25.
- 16 Indian flint rifles Browned at \$7.15.
- 7 Indian percussion rifles Browned at \$7.40.
- 1 Indian percussion rifles Browned backstrap.

October 15, 1856

- 24 Indian Rifles at \$7.00
- 2 Indian Rifles backstrap browned at \$7.75.
- 2 Indian Rifles backstrap browned, engraved at \$8.00
- 4 Indian Rifles backstrap browned, percussion at \$8.00

June 18, 1853:

- 36 Flint Indian Rifles @ \$7.50
- 36 Flint Indian Rifles Browned @ \$7.65.

Lemman's letterheads at this time had the embossed inscription: "Henry E. Lemman, Manufacturer of Rifles & Rifle Barrels, Lancaster, Pa." In one letter he wrote that all rifles were shipped in cases marked "Rifles from Lemman, Lanctr. Pa." He also remarked that all his frizzens were hardened and checked by flinting and that "We never made any other than 'Buck horn Sights.'"

Lots of Lemmans were going to California and a special heavy model was stamped "Bear Rifle" on the barrel. One specimen in a private collection is made for a .58 caliber ball.

In 1855 a bitter controversy erupted between government inspectors of contract rifles and Northwest guns and Edward Tryon. Major P.N. Hagner examined Lemman Indian rifles in the store of Newlin & Marshall in Philadelphia. They had brass patchboxes and could be purchased for \$8.00. He pronounced them superior to Tryon's Indian rifles — "I think it will prove as good a gun as you could find on the market for your purpose."

However, the next apparent result of the controversy was a heavy procession of Northwest gun orders for Lemman from the government:

Jan. 21, 1856 — 1,000 Northwest guns at \$6.50. One-third of 0.70 inch bore, one third with bore of his sample gun (0.60) and one-third halfway between. Half with 42-inch barrels and half 36-inch. "thoroughly blued in the best manner."

April 1, 1857 — 1,000 flint locks at \$6.50, 500 percussion locks at \$6.25. Half .70 caliber, one-fourth each 0.65 and 0.60. One-third with 42-inch barrels, rest 36-inch. "barrels straightened and polished in the best and most serviceable manner."

December 11, 1857 — 1,000 flintlocks and 200 percussion. One third of each caliber. Half each of 42 and 36-inch barrels.

December 21, 1858 — 1,000 flint lock and 200 percussion. One-third of each caliber. Half each of 42 and 36-inch barrels.

October 31, 1859 —

1,400 Flintlock Northwest guns No. 5 @ \$6.75.

100 Flintlock Northwest guns No. 6 @ \$7.25.

200 Percussion Northwest guns No. 5 @ \$6.50.

40 doz. powder horns No. L @ \$3.88.

40 doz. powder horns No. M @ \$5.00.

40 doz. powder horns No. N @ \$5.20.

40 doz. powder horns No. P @ \$6.50.

Nov. 10, 1860 —

1,000 Flintlock Northwest guns \$7,000.

100 Flintlock Northwest guns \$678.00.

100 doz. Powder Horns No. H \$350.00.

I do not know why the unusual large bores were ordered by the government and know of no other American-made Northwest guns of such size. It is apparent that Lemman didn't like them either.

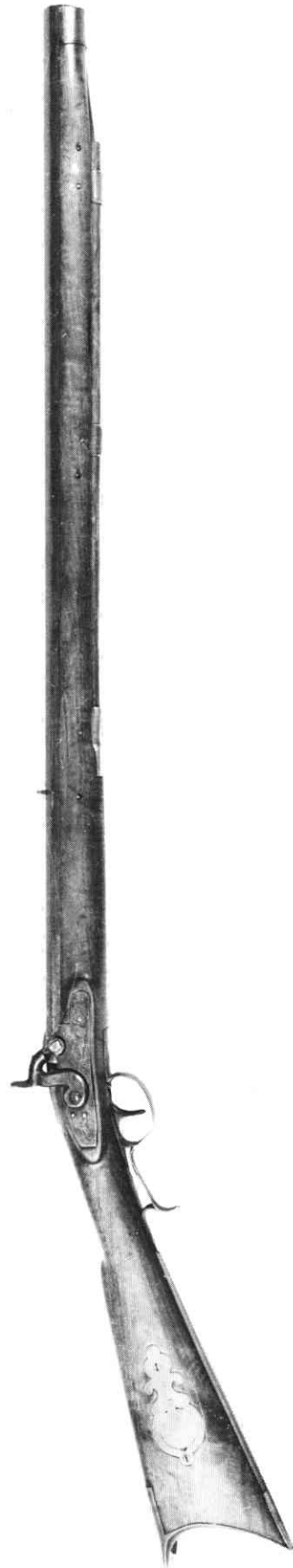
On March 21, 1856 he wrote the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

I fear there are too many large bores ordered, it's a size I never made or seen North West Guns made. Their manufacture will cost no more than the others. Our only fear is the Indians may object on account of their bore. More than half the number is ordered of the largest bore.

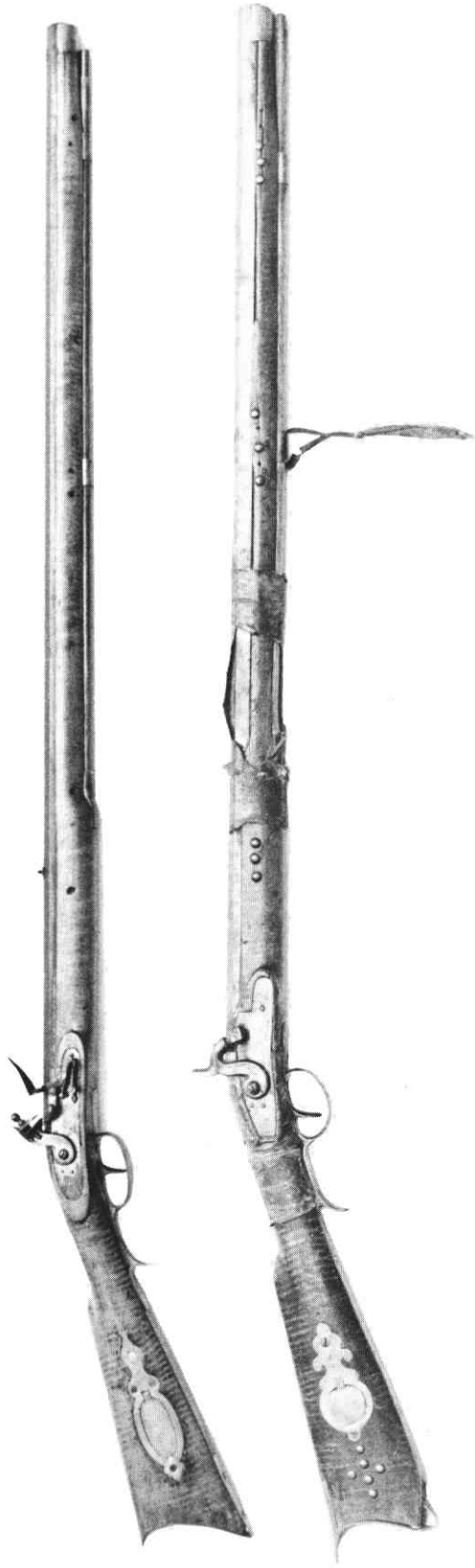
Evidently the Commissioner's Office didn't agree. The big bores were not adopted for some particular tribe or region because mixed lots were sent to many tribes, including the Blackfoot Agency, Fort Laramie (Upper Platte Agency), Bent's Fort and Upper Missouri Agency.

The percussion guns sold in this period utilized flat lock plates held by one side screw. Some of the guns have serpent sideplates secured by the side screw and two wood screws. Others simply had no sideplate at all, just a simple brass washer.

The census of 1860 gave Lemman's investment as \$30,000.00 with 20 horsepower of steam power and a total of 62 workmen. Production for the year ending June 1, 1860 was 5,000 guns.



Leman "Indian rifle" of the 1860's, 31½-inch barrel, 0.50 caliber, iron buttplate. Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.



Left: Lemman flintlock trade rifle, 0.52 caliber, 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch barrel, artificially striped stock.
Right: Lemman "Indian rifle" captured from hostile Indians and formerly No. 319 in the U.S. Cartridge Company Collection 0.53 caliber, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch barrel. Both in the Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.

He did not join the 1861 stampede to enlarge his factory and get war contracts. Before or during the Civil War he did make a few hundred copies of the "Mississippi" short rifle, apparently for militia use. In 1862 he altered to percussion some 1,600 trade rifles in storage at Schuylkill Arsenal near Philadelphia. They were being requisitioned "by General Lane to arm his troops."

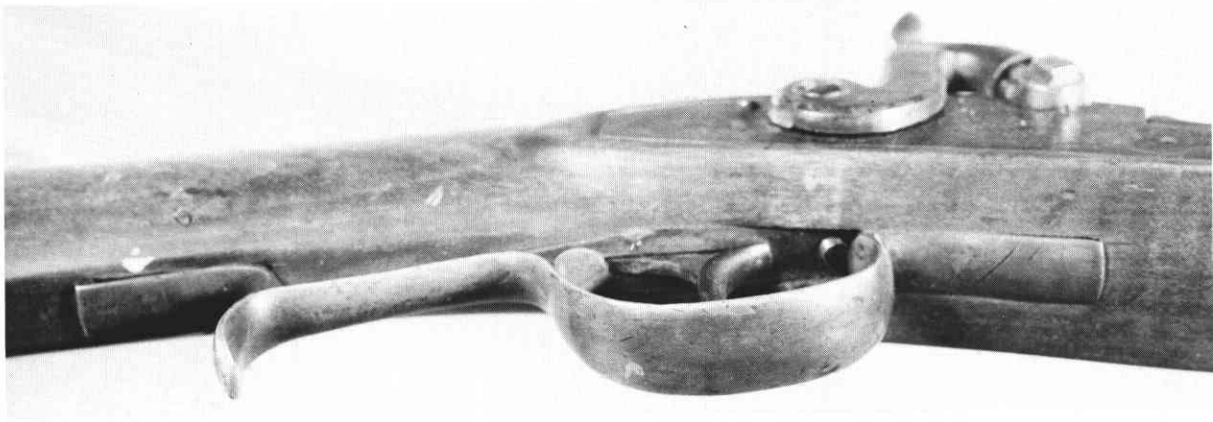
Sporting rifles continued to be the main factory product, most of them halfstock by this time. There was always custom work. The recent Eagle Museum Sale at Strasburg, Pa., included a Lemman double shotgun-rifle combination and an underhammer pistol. Dexter's *35 Year's Scrapbook of Antique Arms* illustrated an odd 5-shot pepperbox, with a trigger-guard mainspring, marked "Leman, Lancaster." Lemman gun locks were apparently also sold detached for they appear on a number of guns by others.

There are cheaper quality Lemman guns which bear only the stamp, "Conestoga Rifle Works," but I am unable to determine when this practice began. A specimen so marked in the Museum of the Fur Trade is very unusual. Barrel, front sight, rod guides, butt plate, stock and front binding strip are all in strict Northwest gun style. Lock and brass trigger guard are identical with Lemman Indian rifles and the stock is artificially striped. The barrel bears Belgian provisional proofs after 1852 and an inspector's mark which may be post-1853 but appears to be the type adopted in 1877. The gun was originally made this way — all parts are stamped underneath with the letter "D." It appears to be some late-period cheap imitation of a percussion Northwest gun.

After the war, business was good for a few years. The real business of settling the West began and there were numerous Indian treaties which included presents of muzzle-loading arms to Indians. Lemman strengthened and shortened his cheap Lancaster rifle to make a very serviceable "Indian rifle" for the West. It was strongly made with heavy barrel, varying in caliber from .44 to .58, and a plain maple stock artificially striped. The breech plug was substantial and the nipple drum turned in against the lug so that it had to be removed before the plug could be taken out.

This special model was extremely popular with Indians and had practically no competition from other makers. Government agents bought them by the hundreds and so did the trading firms dealing with the Plains Indians.

It is very difficult now to document all these purchases. Indian agents could, under certain conditions, buy them without central procurement and many of the traders were small operators who left no records for posterity. In 1867 six boxes of Lemman rifles went to the Omaha Agency in Nebraska. The Peace Commission of



Detail of guard on Lemman "Indian Rifle" - Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.

1867-1868 distributed 200 "Lancaster rifles" at various treaty councils and it is assumed these were all made by Lemman. Fifty rifles were shipped to the Oglala Sioux agent in 1871.

In 1871 the Brule Sioux agent asked the Indian Office to buy "one hundred Lemman Rifles, short barrel, full stock, half-inch bore, with single trigger, the cost not to exceed \$12.00 each at manufactory." Late in 1872 he requested authority to purchase 250 or 300 Lemman muzzle-loaders. On March 10, 1872, Col. J.J. Reynolds at Fort McPherson, Nebraska, wrote the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that Chief Spotted Tail wanted "200 Lemman guns and 30 ponies" to go on a buffalo hunt. In June 1872, trader Jules Ecoffey billed the government for

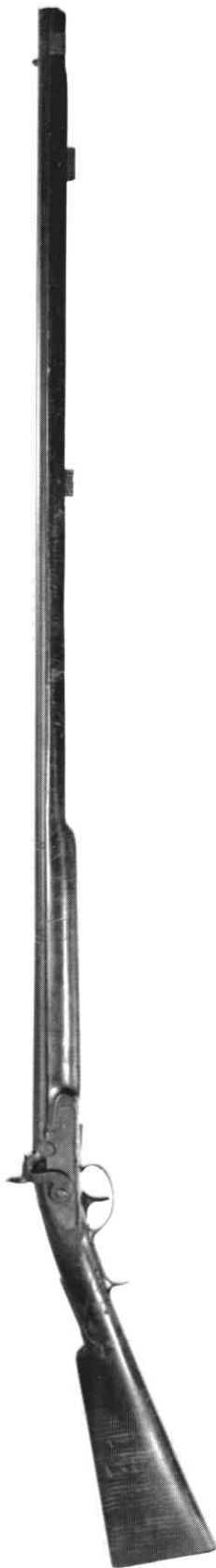
8 Lemman rifles at \$15.00 each which he had supplied to the Indians at Old Red Cloud Agency.

Of 410 guns captured from the Sioux and Cheyennes in the final campaigns of 1877, 94 were Lemman rifles. As late as 1876 John P. Lower of Denver, Colorado was still advertising "Lemman's Indian Rifles" at \$12 to \$15 each.

With the final establishment of Indian reservations all over the West this trade came to a close and the demand for muzzle-loading rifles as sporting weapons was dropping each year. In 1873 Henry Lemman had moved his factory into larger quarters at the southeast corner of James and Christian streets. After 1875 many purchased barrels were used but operations continued at the new location until Lemman died in 1887.

	Side Action Lock, Double Trigger, Oiled Finish Walnut Stock, with Patch Box, Bolt and Escutcheon, Brass Mountings.	
	150 bore, 36 inch, 9½ lbs. weight.....	} \$11 50. Odd Lot.
	160 " 37 " 9 5-16 lbs. weight.....	
No. 3.	JOS. C. GRUBB & CO., Plain Iron Barrels, with Rib, Long Tang Patent Breech Percussion, Side Action Lock, Double Trigger, Oiled Finish Walnut Stock, with Patch Box, Bolt and Escutcheon, Brass Mountings.	
	160 bore, 40 inch, 10 1-16 lbs. weight.....	} \$12 75. Odd Lot.
	160 bore, 41 " 10 " "	
	180 bore, 43 " 10 13-16 " "	
No. 3.	PETERMAN. Ditto, as last above.	
	140 bore, 39 inch, 9¾ lbs. weight.....	} \$12 75. Odd Lot.
	158 " 39 " 10 3-16 lbs. weight.....	
	160 " 38 " 9½ " "	
	CONESTOGA RIFLES, FULL STOCK, Plug and Nipple Percussion, Bright Barrel, Brass M'td., \$7 75	
	Ditto, with Patch Box.....	8 25
	CONESTOGA RIFLES, HALF STOCK, Ribbed and Browned Barrels, Plug and Nipple Percus-	
	sion, Brass Mounted.....	9 00
	Ditto, with Patch Box.....	9 50
No. A.	H. E. LEMAN, Half Stock.....	10 25
No. B.	" " with Patch Box.....	10 75
No. 3.	" " with Rib.....	10 75
No. 4.	" " with Rib and Patch Box.....	11 25
	EXTRAS.	
	Smaller than 150 bore, longer than 42 inches.	

Listings of Conestoga and H.E. Lemman rifles in a catalog of Joseph Grubb & Co., Philadelphia, 1885.



Hybrid Northwest gun by Conestoga rifle works. Percussion lock, 0.60 caliber, artificially striped stock. Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.

A good picture of the last Leman rifles is provided on page 63 of the Jos. C. Grubb & Co. catalog for 1885. H.E. Leman half stocks with or without rib and patchbox are available for \$10.25 to \$11.25. Conestoga rifles are offered in either full stock or half stock styles from \$7.75 to \$9.50.

Henry Leman had led a life to be proud of. In Lancaster he was a member at various times of both branches of the Common Council, was a member of the Masonic Lodge from 1840 on and served on the board of trustees for the Lancaster Cemetery.

Henry Leman was the last and the most productive of the long line of illustrious Lancaster riflemakers. It is obvious that he made over 100,000 guns, perhaps as many as a quarter of a million. Of their quality, we can best quote a statement written while the factory was still in business:

There are few sporting rifles that have more extended or better reputation than those manufactured at the Leman Rifle-Works at Lancaster, Pa., every one being made of the best wrought iron and steel with varnished maple stocks, silver sights, double-triggers, bullet moulds, rifle-wipers, charger, and extra nipples, every rifle being warranted before it leaves Mr. Leman's works. He is a man widely known and respected, and one whose goods are of too high a standard to need any recommendation.

REFERENCES

- Chouteau Accounts*, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.
- Ewing Papers*, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.
- Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly*, Chadron, Nebr. Fall 1968.
- Papers Read Before the Lancaster County Historical Society*, Lancaster, Pa. Vol. XL, No. 3, 1936.
- The Pennsylvania - Kentucky Rifle*, by Henry J. Kauffman. Harrisburg, Pa. 1960.
- Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
 - Contract Books 2, 4, 7, 8.
 - Letters Received From Red Cloud Agency.
 - Letters Received From Whetstone Agency.
 - Letterbooks
 - Miscellaneous Records.
- Small Arms Makers*, by Col. Robert Gardner, New York. 1963.